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`Don't expect miracles'

R.G. Raj

FORMER hockey international Mohamed Abdul Hadi, given a very short time to prepare the Perak team for next month's Malaysia Games in Sabah, has warned not to expect miracles.

Hadi, appointed Perak's coach for the Sabah Games just two months ago, checked in for training with the selected players yesterday, however only 12 of the 21 players were present. The rest are either on a playing tour of Poland or in Kuala Lumpur training with the national team.

The Perak players touring Poland with the juniors are Bubalan Chandrakasi, Fairuz Hamsani, Abas Nik Ahmad, Shukur Abdul Mutalib, Azli Misron and Reduan Nasir.

Perak will be banking heavily on their two top goalkeepers Mohamed Mahathir Thayin, who played for MPPJ in the junior league, and Mohamed Fitri Aziz of City Council.

Hadi said Perak have the material and a good chance of qualifying for the semi-finals.

Longer centralised training was not possible as many of the players were involved in the national junior league where bulk of the Sukma trainees played for Ipoh City Council. A few turned out for the Malaysian Sports School and Anderson.

"With only 12 present and without key players I could not do much when we assembled yesterday. This will go on until the players return from Poland on Aug 27," said Hadi.

"Even then I will only have four days with them as we leave for Sabah on Aug 31. Our opening match is against last year's beaten finalists Kuala Lumpur on Sept 4."

Perak are drawn in Group B with Penang, Johor and Brunei.

Hadi, who played for the National and State teams for more than a decade, said his appointment as Perak's coach for the Sukma Games was a last-minute decision as the Perak HA had earlier appointed Perak Malays coach Zulkifli Hashim who also handled the team in Penang two years ago.

The Perak Sports Council opted for Hadi after taking into consideration the vast experience he had gained playing for the State and National teams. The Parit Buntar-born Hadi also coached Krian District in the just concluded junior league.